

## Service Planning and Delivery

Early intervention services and supports are designed to meet the developmental needs of each child and the needs of the family related to enhancing the child's development. Early intervention services are selected in collaboration with the family; provided by persons qualified to serve the child, and to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child, provided in natural environments. Generally defined, natural environments are those the home and community settings in which children without special needs participate. Service providers must be flexible and offer families services in a variety of ways.

The “Requirements for the Planning and Delivery of Services and Supports” described in this Procedural Bulletin are meant to assist IFSP/FSP teams in considering a variety of factors as they make **individualized** decisions based on the resources, priorities, needs, interests and desired goals for individual children and families. This Procedural Bulletin incorporates early intervention requirements related to service planning and delivery, procedural instructions for implementing these requirements, and rationale for the service planning and delivery approaches expected of all providers. These requirements support DDSN’s family-centered philosophy and implementation is expected to result in:

- the provision of supports and services that build on existing child and family strengths and interests.
- assistance to the family in achieving goals that make a meaningful difference in the life of their child and family.
- an increase in the child’s participation in family and community activities, and
- support to the family in identifying learning opportunities and enhancing their child’s development.

No two children or families have the same constellation of interests, needs, skills, challenges, resources, and desired goals even when they have similar evaluation results. Therefore, a review of any group of IFSP/FSPs is expected to show a wide range of supports and services, service frequencies, service providers, service locations, and community resources being used to address individual child and family goals.

These service planning and delivery requirements reflect expected practice throughout the time the child and family are receiving supports and services in early intervention, not just during initial planning and service delivery. Child and family needs, desired goals, informal supports and resources, and routines and activities change. Discussion with the parent must be continuous in order to plan and provide intervention that is in tune with the ever changing dynamics of the child and family.

The delivery of services and supports often involves caregivers other than the child's parent or immediate family. These caregivers may include grandparents or other extended family members and child care providers. Service providers are expected to consider other caregivers when implementing these requirements and involve them as appropriate and as described in the IFSP/FSP.

## **Requirements for the Planning and Delivery of Services and Supports:**

### **Specifics about the Family-Provider Partnership**

In partnering with families to address desired goals for their child and family, service providers join their developmental expertise with the family's expertise about their child and family in order to establish a shared understanding about how to best support the child's participation in family and community life. The focus should be on expanding the family's confidence and competence to identify opportunities to help the child learn during everyday activities.

Parents help identify other family members and caregivers in the child's life who may be able to assist in addressing the IFSP/FSP goals. The extent to which other caregivers are involved in addressing the IFSP/FSP goals will depend on a number of factors including, but not limited to; the extent to which the family would like to have these other caregivers involved, how much time the child spends with these other caregivers, and the willingness of these other caregivers to learn and apply strategies for increasing the child's learning opportunities and ability to participate in the everyday activities.

### **Specifics about Missed Appointments and Limited Caregiver Participation**

Missed appointments and limited caregiver participation during contacts with service providers are cues that discussion is needed with the parent to determine if or why the goals or supports and services are not meeting the family's needs and what barriers might exist to his keeping scheduled appointments or being an active participant. Revisions to the IFSP/FSP may be needed to better align goals and supports and services with family priorities and daily activities and routines. It is important for Early Interventionist's and service providers to communicate effectively with the parent so that they understand why they are being contacted by the Early Interventionist and how early intervention services may be beneficial to their child and family. Likewise, service providers should involve the Early Interventionists when difficulties with parental participation are encountered.

When a parent is not engaging in Early Intervention services, the Early Interventionist should make numerous and varied attempts to contact the parent (e.g., phone calls, home

visits, mail, requesting assistance from the referral source, where appropriate, the child's physician, relatives, or other community resources) to explore with the parent how the early intervention program might better support their child and family. If unsuccessful in contacting the parent or resolving issues related to the parent's lack of participation, the Early Interventionist must call other team members if available to discuss the current situation and make a decision about whether or not there may be a legitimate cause for the cancellations (e.g., sudden change in health status requiring travel to doctors, or familial stressors, such as a death in the family). These factors should be considered when deciding whether to exit the child from the early intervention program.

Should the IFSP/FSP team recommend that the child be exited from the program, the Early Interventionist must send the parent a letter by mail that:

- states that attempts to involve the parent have been unsuccessful and briefly describes these attempts;
- requests that the parent contact the Service Coordinator within ten (10) calendar days, if he wishes to discuss continued involvement and the receipt of services, and
- informs the parent that he may contact the Agency at any time in the future about resuming participation in the early intervention program.

If the parent does not respond to this letter, the Early Interventionist must proceed according to the IFSP/FSP team's decision regarding whether to exit the child from the early intervention program. As appropriate, for children 3 to 5, the Early Interventionist must complete a closure form to exit the child from the early intervention program. If the child is birth to 3, the child's case should be closed only to the service of family training and must be sent back to the local DHEC office for closure to BabyNet.

### **Parent Declaration to Discontinue in the Program**

If, at any time after enrollment in the early intervention program, the parent declares that they no longer want to participate, the Service Coordinator must send the parent a letter that restates the parent's decision, reviews what the early intervention program is and how it may be beneficial to the child and family, and inform the parent that he may contact the Agency at any time in the future about resuming participation in the early intervention program.

The Service Coordinator must communicate all decisions and actions related to parent participation and the child's enrollment to the members of the IFSP/FSP team. A copy of all written communication to the parent and notes of any other attempts to communicate with the parent must be filed in the Service Coordinator's record on the child.

## **Specifics about Goal Development**

Service delivery options, including specific supports and services, service providers, and locations of service delivery are driven by the child and family's goals developed by the IFSP/FSP team. They are only determined after the desired child and family goals and potential learning opportunities have been identified. Goals are statements of change that the parent wants to see for his child and family as a result of their involvement in early intervention. As part of the IFSP/FSP process, goals are identified based on information gathered through the evaluation and assessment process.

This process includes conversations with the family to identify current activities and settings, potential child learning opportunities, successes and challenges, and areas where the family would like assistance. This process also includes a curriculum based assessment that addresses those activities, settings, opportunities, and areas (See Procedural Bulletin #8). After child and family goals have been identified, the IFSP/FSP team, which includes the family as an equal team member, determines the early intervention supports and services, including frequency, intensity, and duration, and the services necessary and appropriate to address the goals.

Individualized goals are provided in the context of everyday routines and activities, and are functional and integrated (i.e., goals are relevant for the family, focus on the child's participation in activities and settings that are important to the family, and focus on the whole child rather than discreet skills). Services are not goals; they are a means to achieving a desired goal. For example, "Johnny will receive physical therapy weekly" is not an goal. In contrast, "Johnny will sit independently while playing with toys" is appropriate wording for an goal statement. In developing desired goals, the IFSP/FSP team starts with activities and settings in which the family participates and identifies as important, as well as activities and settings the family would like to pursue.

## **Specifics about Supports and Services in Everyday Routines, Activities and Places**

Consideration of child and family routines, activities and natural settings must occur throughout the early intervention process. The idea of supports and services in everyday routines, activities and places broadens the definition of natural environments to more than just a location for services. While location is important, it is only one element of quality services and supports. The elements of why the service is being provided, what the service is, who is providing it, when it is provided, and how it is being provided are the other essential characteristics.

Strategies to address the IFSP/FSP goals focus on learning opportunities that occur throughout the daily routines and activities of the child and family. These strategies

recognize the family as the primary influence of change in the child's development. The family helps the IFSP/FSP team and service providers understand these daily routines and activities. The service providers then assist the parent in recognizing and using existing opportunities as well as creating new learning opportunities that will help the child reach the desired goals. Service providers work with the parent to formulate adaptations to strategies and recommendations that will promote a child's participation in the activities and routines of their natural settings. Whenever possible, service providers use items already present in the child's environment when providing early intervention supports and services. They also assist the family to identify what they have in their own environment that can be used during daily routines and activities to accomplish the identified goals.

The IFSP/FSP team must consider multiple factors when identifying appropriate intervention supports and services to address IFSP/FSP child and family goals, including the expertise needed to support the family, abilities and interests of the child and family, needs expressed by the family, and family and community resources. Strategies must support the child's and family's ability to achieve the identified goals and their ability to function where they live, learn, and play.

Strategies for meeting goals incorporate activities other than the formal services provided by a particular discipline. Examples of informal activities may include library story time, playing in the park, and grocery shopping. These activities must be individualized to the child and relate to specific goals and activities spelled out in the child's plan. Family Training should not be provided at agency sponsored functions where services are delivered to children in group settings.

### **Specifics about Who Provides Services**

The early intervention approach used in South Carolina allows for flexibility in how the specialized skills of early intervention providers are used in partnership with families in order to address the desired child and family goals identified by the IFSP/FSP team. This approach includes direct hands-on intervention, consultation with the family and other caregivers as they interact with the child, collaborating with other providers as needed, and an IFSP/FSP review process that allows changes to any of the above to occur as needed to meet current IFSP/FSP goals.

The IFSP/FSP team, which includes the parent, determines the appropriate early intervention supports and services needed to meet the desired goals. The team then identifies the expertise needed to support the parent to implement the IFSP/FSP strategies based on each child's and family's unique configuration of skills and interests, resources, needs, priorities, and desired goals. The match between the IFSP/FSP goals and strategies and the ability of the provider to support and assist the family in accomplishing those goals is the most important consideration in choosing an early intervention service provider to partner with that family.

When a need for more than one service provider is identified by the IFSP/FSP team, it is critical that all service providers collaborate with each other, the Service Coordinator and the parent to ensure that services are provided in an efficient and effective manner. Goals are to be integrated and discipline free, meaning not necessarily related to a single developmental domain or discipline, but reflective of the functional skills needed for participation in family and community life. The family's ability and desire to accommodate multiple providers should be considered when determining the frequency and intensity of contacts with providers.

### **Specifics about Where Supports and Services are Provided**

Supports and services occur in the context of and must be integrated into the normal daily activities, routines and environments of each child and family. Supports and services fit into the family's life and build effectively on the resources and supports already in place.

For each child and family, the choice of location for supports and services is based on the activities associated with the desired goals on the IFSP/FSP. While the child's home or child care center may be an appropriate setting for supports and services for many activities, other natural settings such as a community center, a neighborhood park, the grocery store, etc. may be appropriate instead of, or in addition to, the home or child care center depending on the activity settings and learning opportunities the family identifies as important to them. The IFSP/FSP team should also consider providing services in multiple settings when appropriate for helping the child generalize new skills (e.g., mobility, behavior) in a variety of locations. The team should consider the following questions when discussing the specifics about where supports and services are provided:

1. Does the environment support the child's participation in the daily activities and routines of their family in community settings where children live, learn, and play?
2. Does the environment promote the parent's ability to model and reinforce behaviors in daily activities and caregiving between contacts with the provider?
3. Does the environment allow the child to experience a variety of sensory and physical stimuli that can enhance the child's responsiveness to the service?
4. Does the environment foster the use and development of natural supports in the family's social and cultural network and promote the family's integration into community life? and
5. Does the environment support the acquisition of skills in the child's and family's daily routines?

## **Specifics about Frequency and Intensity of Supports and Services**

Early intervention supports and services are focused on enhancing the child's ability to participate in family and community life and supporting the family's ability to enhance their child's development. Frequency and intensity means the number of days or sessions that a service will be provided and the length of time the service is provided during each session.

Two broad, critical questions for the IFSP/FSP teams to ask in determining the frequency and intensity of supports and services needed to meet the IFSP/FSP goals are:

1. How often will the child's intervention likely need to be changed? and
2. How often does the family need support to feel confident in using intervention strategies?

In determining the answer to each of these two broad questions, the IFSP/FSP team is expected to consider the following factors:

### **How often will the child's intervention likely need to be changed?**

- Is the relationship between the child and family and the provider new (e.g., because they have just begun Infant-Toddler Program services or there has been a change in providers) or well established? If the family is just beginning services from their initial Individualized Family Service Plan, there may be more frequent changes in strategies as the Infant-Toddler Program provider continues learning about the activity settings, routines, and how the child responds to proposed strategies.
- Will the strategies used to address the goals need to be modified frequently or will the same strategies be used for a long period of time?
- Is attainment of a goal especially urgent and able to be resolved quickly with intensive intervention (e.g., new referral of a child with non-organic failure-to-thrive, which needs quick resolution, a child's behavior is prohibiting the family from finding a child care provider to accept the child)?
- Are there a large number or a wide variety of strategies involved in addressing the desired goals or are there relatively few or more similar strategies?
- Is the child progressing at the expected rate in meeting identified goals?

**How often does the family need support to feel confident in using intervention strategies?**

- Are the services provided at a frequency and intensity that matches the family's need for timely, additional guidance at each contact?
- Do the goals identified require a high level of specialized skill or are they more easily implemented with minimal guidance and instruction? When a higher level of skill is needed to address goals, there may be a need for an increased frequency or intensity of services and supports for a period of time while the family becomes comfortable in implementing the strategies.
- Are the goals or strategies new for the child and family? The need to increase frequency or intensity of services may be evident when a child enters a new developmental phase and more frequent guidance is needed by the family.
- Will the service provider be working with other caregivers in addition to the family in addressing goals? If the service provider will be working with a variety of caregivers, more frequent services may be needed for a period of time. This extra time will allow the service provider to learn more about the child's daily activities and routines with these other caregivers and to teach them various strategies and skills to address desired goals.
- Is the parent's ability to participate in implementing suggested activities affected by his or her own cognitive or emotional issues? If so, the IFSP/FSP team will need to consider how other informal and formal community resources and supports, other caregivers, and early intervention services can be combined to best address the full constellation of child and family needs. However, more frequent early intervention services are not a substitute for an active parent-provider partnership that includes involvement by the parent in each early intervention session.
- Does the child need intensive, one-on-one support to participate in his environment? Under these circumstances, there also may be a need for an increase in support to the family in addressing the IFSP/FSP goals.

It is expected that the frequency and intensity of Early Intervention supports and services will change over time for an individual child and family, sometimes increasing and sometimes decreasing, as the variety of factors outlined above change. As with other aspects of service delivery, only the IFSP/FSP team can make decisions about the frequency and intensity of service delivery. This decision cannot be made by individual providers. Third party payers, such as Medicaid and insurance companies, may authorize or reimburse service providers for more visits or place limitations on the frequency and intensity of services and may specify the number of contacts by a service provider. See Procedural Bulletin #9 for specifics on family training delivery.